Stockholm Syndrome

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Stockholm Syndrome

by Aerosol

Summary

Stockholm Syndrome is another "What would have been if" - story of mine, including the pairing Brownham and Hannigram. In this story, Matthew Brown could escape from Jack and ran to Will to drag him out of his cell. After this they flee together, living incognito in the next months, but they get caught in the end and Will has to face Hannibal Lecter yet for another time. But, what has happened in these months? And how did they change Will and his relationship with Dr. Lecter? You may find out if you dare to read this story till the bitter end...

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Stockholm syndrome *, or capture-bonding, is a psychological phenomenon in which hostages express empathy and sympathy and have positive feelings toward their captors, sometimes to the point of defending and identifying with them. These feelings are generally considered irrational in light of the danger or risk endured by the victims, who essentially mistake a lack of abuse from their captors for an act of kindness.*

The FBI 's Hostage Barricade Database System shows that roughly 8% of victims show evidence of ***Stockholm syndrome***

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The cell in Chilton's asylum, acclaimed and inundated with rumors, was located in the same condition as Will Graham had left it once.

A square room with a narrow bed, bare brick walls and a parade of rusty black bars with a *wonderful* view of the sterile clean hallway floor. Will sat on the mattress, gently bent over, elbows balanced on his thighs, hands intertwined. His gaze went straight into nothingness, focused no point, no crack in the scratched stone. His eyes reflected emptiness. He did not even look up as steps echoed on the floor, broke through the sound barrier and beat on his ears. He didn't mind. He already knew who was his visitor this time. Alana had already been with him to reveal her reproachful, tear-streaked face. Jack had visited him two hours ago, to squeeze the last details of what Will had successfully thwarted by his stubborn, uncooperative silence. As the steps paused outside his cell it was almost as if he could grab the other man's presence leatherly and firmly in the air. He took a deep breath. Then another one. Another one. It was a game. Everything had become a game and Will had reached a point where there was nothing more to lose for him. He had lost a bet that had been more precious than he ever thought possible. He had not planned it. He had not planned much at all, not planned of what had happened in the meantime. Especially not him. Not this nurse.

Matthew Brown had never been his plan.

“Mr. Graham? Mr. Graham, wake up!”

Will looks up, his eyelids still glued half, tormented by a restless, feverish sleep. After seeing the blood-bathed sink, he decided to lie down, close his eyes and quietly sink in one of his dreams. But no peep. No whimper. No dream. He looks up, recognizes Matthew Brown standing in front of his cell and peers through the bars. His face is like powdered with chalk, chest soaked in blood and the bare feet maltreated. The fabric of his shirt holds the light shading of a cloudless summer sky, blowing like a shroud over his naked shoulders, bags on his back, pushed by a breeze, which does not exist. He breathes heavily. Will does not know whether he’s corrupted by his hallucinations again or really sees his admirer, eying his frown at this moment. The blood is red and dark shining and fresh where the light falls, but Will feells neither fear nor horror. He has seen enough blood in his life to not to panic at such a sight. Nevertheless, his eyes wander to the targeted source of the river, manifesting itself in the left shoulder of the former nurse and germinates one ounce of discomfort in his gut. Association. Memory. *A gunshot wound* he thinks, involuntary feeling an itch in his own shoulder where Jack has drawn his own mark in the flesh. The same gunner. The same weapon. The same pain. The same reason. Hannibal. Again and again, Hannibal ...

“You have not managed to kill Hannibal Lecter.” are the first words that leave Will's mouth and later he will be ashamed of them, for he had thought of nothing else but the survival of his former psychiatrist, instead to care about Matthew’s injury.”Why did you come back?”

Matthew successively presses the bloodless lips together until they are a narrow bar. He seems upset, angry. Humiliated.

“I wanted to say sorry.” he says, his voice low, but marked by serious regret and reproach. “I disappointed you.” The finding seems to gnaw at him like mice at a cheese corner. Will sighs. Of course he is disappointed, but thinking about it intimately, he had realized hours before that this would not be the end. Could not be. Neither for him nor for Hannibal. It was just another brick in their game of dominoes, rolling and pulling on rows of consequences. Oh, he is so sick of being dragged from field to field. He has become tired of it all.

“There is nothing to be sorry about.” he says and looks Matthew directly into the jade-green eyes, although he otherwise denies direct eye contact vehemently. He stumbles in this green mist, a moor of stunned agony, unsatisfied enjoyment and drunken shame. For a few seconds he can not believe how many emotions dawn in the iris of this ice-cold killer. At the same time he almost cannot not bring himself up to read the manifest, even obscene affection in it that is reserved for him alone smoldering beneath the surface. “To be honest, I think I must apologize to **you** and not the other way round. But you should better hurry and flee now, Matthew. Jack doesn’t like to let his prey go.”

A few words only. The touch of instruction in his rough speckled baritone. The mild advice that provides protection to an end, a separation, a way out. Matthews face lights up as the American evening sky on the Fourth of July, while fireworks scatter in popping colours.

“Oh, I'm going to take flight, Mr. Graham. But a bit different than you might think.”

He smiles broadly. A petal of dry blood stays on his left cheekbone. “Still know what I told you about hawks?” He ignores the pain in his shoulder without much effort. He is strong. He is here. He has set a new target. His eyes glow like coal mountains. A peculiar joy and excitement suddenly feds on his whole appearance. Will becomes suspicious. What it does not discourage but to answer the question. He finds nothing wrong. Careless mistakes.

“I said that they’re solitary.” he answers truthfully. Matthew nods. And nods. And nods. Not cease to nod.

“Exactly. And I said, that’s their weakness.” His grin enlarges to an escalating, demonic Incubus grimace as he browses in his pocket and shortly after waving a bunch of jingling keys in his hand. The sound seems eerily in the dark silence of the utopian tract. “But not anymore.” he says and unlocks the cell door with a practiced grip. The alarm doesn’t occur. Matthew must have switched it off plus the cameras. Will gets up from the bed, partly surprised and partly confused. He thinks so feverishly that his brain should smoke by now. Matthew leans forward like a servant and gives an obedient gesture directing to the hallway.

“Come on, I’ll get you out of here. My car stands outside.”

Nausea throbbed in his temples. Will groaned and held his head. His fingers pressed into the agonizing points above his eyebrows, but it didn’t help much.

Had he really thought it would go on like this forever? That Matthew and he would spent the rest of their lives together incognito? Oh, how stupid he had been. Naive. He should have known better. One’s fate could not be escaped on such a light manner. Fortuna had sun and moon as her eyes and she saw her sinful children by day and night, light and darkness, followed them, waiting to come out and catching them with her claws. Will had it looped back on hands and feet in his old life, dressed in all the problems and grievances, which he had so desperately want to unwind. Matthew, however, had mangled all, as Prometheus had bound and mangled his punishment for bringing the divine fire to the people.

It was his fault. Only his. He felt miserable.

“Hello, Dr. Lecter.” The words came and went over his lips without a significant emotional impulse. He had neither the strength nor the necessary defiance to send out a hoarse roaring for the psychiatrist. He took it as condign punishment, this meeting, held without rhyme or reason in his opinion.

Hannibal stood there and looked at him in silence. The plastic plate with the lettering *Visitor* rattled like a police badge on his chest. He was quite calm. Quiet like a grave.

“Hello, Will.” he replied finally. Breathing. Pause. Pause. Breathing. “How are you?” Light tenderness in the voice that had followed Will through the darkest nights and beyond. Gentleness and compassion. Concern. The desire to care for. Honest intentions behind it? Will could only guess.

He laughed at Hannibal's words. It was a cold, tough laughter.

“How do I feel?” he repeated mockingly, his voice harsh and strangely hollow. Among his eyes floated deep rings, similar to pitch dark pits. The chains rattled like porcelain dishes on his wrists, rubbed, rubbed off, rubbed to the bone and from there to the substance, the center of all perception and pain. Will felt no pain. He felt nothing anymore.

He was dead inside.

“Matthew?”

Will's brows fuse worryingly, as he observes Matthew’s gunshot wound with a critical glance.

“Is everything alright?”

He does not know how long they've been driving around, but the display of the dashboard tells him urgently that the tank must be filled and the engine stutters like Mary Berkley with whom he had visited the third grade of elementary school. The digital clock just below the dashbord shows him that it is three clock in the morning. A very ungodly hour, to be still on the road. Left and right of them extends barren land, nothing but the gravel-strewn highway. Wolf tramp is only an unreal dream sequence in the distance. Baltimore as fairyland. His old life has become a ghost without a name in this night. Somehow, this idea is immensely comforting. Somehow this idea is also like the feeling that one must have when the heart is peeled from your flesh alive and keeps throbbing to cry in front of bitterly curved lips.

He believes, in fact, to have been torn. Not physically, but mentally. He wants to cry, say goodbye to his dogs and the people he once called his friends, but his eyes are burned and dusty as the Gobi desert and stubbornly focused on Matthew’s demolished shoulder. The skin tone of his counterpart has turned from lime to the morgue and dry rivulets of acidic sweat are beaded on his forehead, dripping into the crook of his neck. His neck, however, is dipped into garish glaring red, now crumbling like cracked paint from his skin. (The smell of clotted blood pollutes the entire interior of the car, but Will saves the comment.) The lower lip is drawn in between teeth, his eyes dull and meaningless, but highly concentrated on the road ahead of them. The knuckles, clutching the steering wheel, reminiscent of splintered bone fragments as hard as they dig into the soft foam cover. When he has to focus his last strength to not prompt a swoon upon themselves and maneuver them both in a ditch. Will isn’t fond of his opponent’s condition. It gets worse with every meter they travel and he is dead sure that the blood loss and the agony of the shot burden Matthew more than he wants to admit it.

Earlier, with the aid of adrenaline, triggered by the shock and penetrating stimulation Matthew was cool and reasonably sane to act. But now the horror sinks slowly in as boots do, peaking in wet mud and Will knows from personal experience that the sheer a nervous breakdown can lead to a blackout in seconds. Matthew is a few inches away from the abyss he himself has already passed several times. He does not want Matthew to jump into this depth, does not want to watch helplessly as his eyes roll back under fluttering eyelids, does not want the body tense beside him and shake and collapse in the seat ejaculating guttural sounds. He also wants no car accident. He doen't want to die this way. He also doesn't want to see Matthew in this horrible state before he dies.

"Matthew." he repeats, now a bit stricter. Appeals to remaining reason, if it has ever existed in the brain of this man. "Matthew, talk to me!"
Will noted that Matthew submissively responds to him when he addresses him by his first name. Homey. Warm. Like a dog who is called by his master. Will knows that. It gives a feeling of togetherness, subtly bitter and beautiful. The *Mr. Brown* is already thrown overboard and drowns in an ocean of nothing. The *Mister* and *Brown* are barriers that are not needed.
Even now, the intensive use of the first name takes effect and he never expected anything else. Matthew clicks his tongue, his eyes jerk rapidly to him, then back on the road. An electrical pulse, the jerky by strained muscles.

"Don't worry, Mr. Graham. I'll survive." he replies. His voice is quiet, but Will hears the timid trembling underneath. The risk of a collapse is now within close reach. Will swallows. For the first time since his imprisonment he slowly feels something like fear .... for another human being. A man bleeding out of his chest.

"You look ill." he replies patiently, leans forward, grabs Matthew' s arm. "Let me see the wou-"

No! ¨ Will jerks back abruptly as Matthew had just referred to him with a whip on his face. Equal to the call of a siren. His heart is pounding brutally in his ears. Matthew's internal trembling has pushed itself outward. He trembles and quakes and trembles. The sweating has increased. His breath catches chopped off in his lungs before it escapes his lips. He is pale as moonlight. "I mean, no, all right. I can do it. This time I won't fail, I swear!" Anxious green eyes look at Will. Anxious green eyes. The eyes of a killer? No, not now. The eyes of a child, perhaps. A boy who wants to make someone (him?) proud, yearning for acknowledgment and praise. The longing for understanding, tacit acceptance of his true nature. The need of control and the knowledge that you will not take him this control until it has done its job. His new task. His new goal.

Will can read Matthew Brown's mind like an open book in large print letters and although he is used by his empathy to see more than he would like to see, it's all a little queasy now.
He looks in these children's eyes and wonders secretly what this man has probably driven to surrender to the fascination of killing. What drives a person to kill other members of his own race like cattle in rural livestock barns? One is not born evil. The world is formed evil. People make bad decisions, but born for them? No. This simply can't be. It can't… can it?

"I believe you can do this, Matthew. But dead in the back seat – what does that do for me?

Let me clean the wound at least, so that no infection settles in.” A yellow sign, flashing on the roadside. A subdivision, 100 miles away. All right. He runs with a fingertip soothingly over Matthew’s wrist. The delicate hint of a touch. No more.” We’ll drive to this village.” he says imploringly. “There is a pharmacy for sure. I'm no doctor, but I guess I'll can do something with bandages and ointment.”

Matthew finally turns his head, looks at him. Panic blossoms on his damp cheeks and wraps around his trembling mouth.

“Mr. Graham-“ He interrupts himself, considering, searching for words. Will is waiting for him. “It’s alright.” he encourages. “Tell me what bothers you.”

He sees Matthew swallow. His Adam's apple pushes outward falls back again. A fascinating view in the violet glow of the night.

“Will you come back… again?” Will petrifies. The question hits him unprepared.

“Why do you think I would not come back?” he checks carefully. Matthew inspects the fabric of his blood-soaked pants.

“Why should you?” he returns simply and there is such a lost, hopeless expression on his face that Will speculates Matthew might suffer from schizophrenia. This side is not murderous, not bloodthirsty. It is thin and fragile. The shell of an abandoned being. A solitary being. Will is well acquainted with loneliness.

“Where else should I go?” he counters with a shrug, rehearses a shallow smile to pay off the bitterness of his words. “I’ve got nothing left but you.”

Matthews eyes widen, bright as mirror before undisguised relief is sagging in them, heavy and sluggish and monstrous. He remains silent.
Will takes it as a sign to be able to get out, as they drive into the village and stop in front of the nearest pharmacy. Of course the shop is closed, the windows wrap themselves in a dark and dreamless sleep. It does not matter to Will. He’s already accused of being a serial killer, a simple burglary won’t harm him that much anymore.
But before he finally gets out of the car, he turns around one last time, captivating Matthew eye to eye. The green is still in panic, but also curious. Eager.

“I’ll come back.” Will promises. “Wait here for me.”

Matthew nods. A bit tortured, perhaps, but he nods. He gives in and that's what counts.

And Will is very aware of these green, anxious eyes and how they are are doubtfully drilling into his shoulder blades until he has broken through the door and disappears inside the building.

That the alarm screams and roars is not surprising. He already knew at the beginning that it has to be fast, and he is not allowed to waste time.

After he has filled all necessary things in a plastic bag with a risible supermarket chain name on front and back, he runs out of the pharmacy, dislocating his head to find the car. He does not need to look far. Matthew stands where he commanded him to stand still and watcheshim quiet as a mouse, hands melted like wax on the steering wheel and the pale face *faithful faithful faithful* in the cheap glow of a flashing street lamp. When he goes near him and throws the bag into the backseat, he hears Matthew gasping for air and judging ihis unhealthy bluish mottled skin after, Will attacks the creeping realization that he has been holding his breath all the time. He wonders if Matthew would have suffocated if he would have eventually left him and that's a miserable, nasty scenario in his mind.

Good boy Will thinkssuddenlywithout being able topreventit, andheremembersWinston.

Will tells Matthew to drive and Matthew engages a gear. The tires roar.

They don’t speak another word. They don't have to.

“How long has it been ... “ Will mused thoughtfully, glanced up to Hannibal. Even his view seemed exhausted. A kinky pattern of sea-blue hematoma is poured on the skin of his bare upper arms. He had rolled up the sleeves intentionally so that they were visible to every passer-by. He wanted them to see, wanted to let Hannibal see in how many ways the abstinence had influenced him. ”A year? Two years?”

Hannibal hesitated a few seconds before answering. His form was powerful, imposing and collected, had not changed. A melancholy shade notched his marble features, flipped over his thin lips. Will had sometimes dreamed of that these lips kissed him, then broke up his mouth and bitten through his tongue until it was not more than a wet bloody stump. He had watched as sharply cutting teeth had risen behind these lips and had chewed his flesh with relish, piece by piece while Will screamed and the moist blood gurgled in his throat like a guttural tambourine. Now, however, those lips were not dangerous but still close enough to divert his monstrous hallucinations in an irreversible reality. They just spoke to him now, formed words, sounds. They looked soft in the dim light of the ceiling lamps. Silky. Treacherous. Inviting. Savaging. Seduction. Decay. Decline.

Lucifer.

Of course the devil has beautiful lips. Why else should the angels want to kiss him?
Matthew’s amused voice echoed in his thoughts and wedged Will’s nails deeper into his skin.

“Eight months, Will.” Hannibal cleared his throat. It seemed strange to Will, since he had never seen before, that this man had needed oiling his voice to speak. “Eight months and 20 days you’ve been ... abroad.”

Will nodded, staring straight ahead, through the walls. Abroad. So it would be called later

and listed up in his biography. *Got carried away.*

“Nnngh, it burns.” Matthew complains between clenched teeth. His chest rises and falls in drastic speed, his breath whistling like the hiss of a snake on his lips.

“If it burns, it helps.” Will comments drily, but feels obliged to massage the tortured’s neck gently. “Hush. It will be over soon.”
The bullet is lies near them in a petri dish. Two bottles of high-proof rum were needed to boost Matthews pain limit so low that Will could break the bullet from the flesh, using a pair of pliers. The bloody crater is now paved meticulously with gauze and the bleeding seems to have chosen a swift end. Will is relieved. One thing less to worry. Now, he has to eliminate the collateral damage. Like a leaking diesel engine, but that should not be a problem. His hands are made for this.

As magically attracted from the comforting attitude Matthew suddenly leans back, pressed his back against Will's chest. His eyelids float at half-mast. His view is exhausted, but fortunately not dull. Livid and agile. Will says nothing against the unexpected contact. Special situations need special permissions, or so he thinks.

“Mr. Grah-“

“Will.” the profiler interrupts, making a dismissive gesture. “Call me Will, it’s okay.” Matthew turns his head and looks at him as if he had lost his mind. Will laughs, because this expression is new and includes kind of an absurd comedy. “Hey, why the puzzled face? You just saved me from the madhouse, I think we can call us by our first names.” He tries to defuse the situation, if this situation is a bomb that he has fired accidentally in the background and makes ***tick tick tick*** when he sleeps.

Matthew tilts his head as if to consider whether such and such is true, then decides on the validity of the argument and shines like a ten-watt bulb. Will falls casually on how his ears stick out and thinks it gives him something naughty, mischievous. He likes that and doesn’t know why.

“Yes, Mr. G -... Will.” Matthew improves immediately. His gaze falls disapprovingly on his shoulder and watches his watery, raw flesh. “You don’t have to care too much about this. Wounds can heal without medicine.” He knows that. He has experience with this kind of injuries and many of them had to close and heal without any treatment. But that's the past. He cries no tears after it. Not a single one.

Will listens to him, nods, but doesn’t let go of his ‘project’ for a second. He does not want to get the wound infected or worse, he has his own stubborn mind and is glad to finally use it for gentler things than the reconstruction of several murder cases.

“Hm. Well, take it easy,” he soothes. “as… the beginning of a redemption.”. Matthew looks up, puzzled.

“Redemption? For what?” asks. He seems honestly surprised.

“For the job I intended you to do.” Will sighs. He notes that he often tends to sigh when it turns to this topic. “I didn’t want to… I didn’t want you to get hurt.”

Matthew shook his head. He does not agree for sure.

¨This was no job, Will. It was a friendly turn.” he corrects in solemnity and Will can not help but smile. It’s a shy smile, but it's there and it stays there. At least for one or two precious moments.

“You think we're friends? “

“Yes.” Matthew replies promptly. He smiles. A shadow sweeps across his profile. “Aren’t we?”

Will’s mouth falls down. Silence fills the room. A shabby hotel room of the lowest category, but under the given circumstances similar to a reasonable oasis.
Matthews body heat flows through him, tingles sleepily on his skin. His eyes darken.

“I’m not a murderer,” he admits to Matthew. “Neither the Chesapeake Ripper nor someone else. I ... my empathy is the only reason I can connect with murderers and grasp the significance of their actions. I have no blood on my hands.”

“I know. Hannibal told me.”

Will’s heartbeat sets off for one second completely.

“And you still want me to be your 'friend'?” He does not understand. Can’t. He thought Matthew sees a partner in him, someone to kill with, no more, no less. But Matthew just moves closer to him and oppressively he tilts his head and nestles his face in Will’s collarbone. He winks at him from below. He looks ... happy.

“More than anything else. I've never stopped to want that.” Strangely enough for Will, Matthew takes his right arm and puts it around his waist, playing with the fingers of the hand as with the wisps of a doll. “You and I, we are the same, Will. We understand each other. I don’t want to lose this.” He speaks seriously and warm. Will swallows. He heard it before, this *We are equal.* He has experience of when a serial killer wants a friend and does everything he can to get him, under whatever circumstances. And that had ended in a disaster. Would it be similar with Matthew? Another low blow he wouldn’t survive.

“Then we could be it. Friends, I mean.” Will says slowly and does not believe it himself. Not now. “But until then, we must be able to trust each other. Can I trust you, Matthew?”

Matthew grins like a child whom he offered a lollipop the size of a sneaker.

“Entirely.” he says. And before Will can dodge the other man, Matthew pushes him an acute, explosive kiss on his ear as to seal a contract. A bite, almost. Will’s facial features derail and Matthew giggles.

The nurse is as delusional as blessed.

The walnut wood brown eyes darted over the labeled skin Will offered and filled with angry sparks until they bathed in a dark thunder. It was not Will himself, for whom the anger was welling up in the psychatrist, this was something the former profiler knew with indubitable certainty. The unleashing hurricane in the old, noble Iris was relished and pointed to the person whose fault it was that Will had this purple bruising. But this load of emotion behind the indifferent mask that Hannibal wear like his own skin, brought Will inevitably to the sad realization that the electrically crackling tension between them had not lost one iota of its intensity, even after these eight months.
They were still tied together with invisible threads, no matter how much Will sought to deny it. Hannibal was the iron bars and he was the magnet that would scar over this shimmering, sharp polished surface, hold on, get a grip, melt down into it. This man had destroyed his life, had made him believe to be a serial killer, had drugged him , corrupted his perception corrupt and yet, still not only hatred burned in his chest when he looked at the psychiatrist.

It was an indictment. *He* was an indictment, a heretic of his own faith and knowing about it merely led to further humiliation. Hannibal Lecter had also influenced his past as today's presence, had broken him and sewed the pieces seam in a new mirror. He did’nt even have to be physically present, Will’s dreams proved that. His voice was it that rang through his bones, when his concentration wanders off in strange environment. It was his hypnotic accent that was dripping through his veins, making the blood circulate faster and stronger. It brought to boil. To evaporation.
A thought crept over him like ugliness in fine arts. What if his relationship with Matthew had not mitigated his dependence on Hannibal by the permanent removal, but even intensified? That would be in fact a satanic development of events ... what did not automatically mean that it could not true.

“You'll always have a soft spot for Hannibal Lecter, nothing will change that no matter how much you’d wished it to be otherwise.” Matthew discloses softly, his lips hiding in Will's

curls. They lie in a bed that doesn't belong to them. In a house that is not theirs. The actual owners are sitting in the basement. They are neatly lined up according to size, father, mother, daughter and son. The perfect, average American family with perfectly average separated wattles. Will has asked Matthew not to do it, but he merely laughed. *They would have called the police, baby. The local television reports hourly about us*. His consoling argument. The hardness in his eyes when he explained. An argument that Will did not please, a hardness that never applies to him and he still attaches an instinctive hatred to it.

"Since I have failed to kill him, he's a remaining problem. But that's okay. Now **I'm** here" Matthew snorts, as he had won a battle. "And I will do everything in my power to ensure that I'll banish this sleazy bastard in the rearmost limits of your memory. Trust me, baby. We're gonna have lots of fun together."

Will takes a deep breath. He still feels some discomfort when he listens Matthew cursing Lecter, but he thinks that this will go away over time. It's a learning process. An open wound. The final caps of the connection. Snip snap. Snip snap. He has to let go.
"I'm convinced ... but don't call me *baby*. I'm older than you." he mumbles, squinting to the hallway and almost expecting an angry husband running in with a Winchester rifle pointing at his head. An illusion that can not be true. In his mind he shakes his head and grumbles about his agile imagination.

Matthew giggles. He has a unique way to giggle. Short and choppy. High and hollow. Will has become accustomed it, as he has become accustomed to much that brings their firm bonding with.

"Yes you are." he contradicts, stroking a hand in a relaxed, self-assured about Will's lower back with a relaxed, self-assured hand. A gesture of protection and comatose greed. "Now that you're my baby. Babydoll." He says it immensely loving. So tenderly, that it sends a shiver down the profiler's neck.

"No, Matt. Just... no." he repeats ashamed and laughs, hiding his face in Matthew's collarbone. Matthew hums and moves his hand deeper. The last glimmer of early evening paints the room, feeding the walls with a red-violet silhouette. Fall will come soon. For the first time in a long time, Will feels warm and safe.

It started with nightmares, Will remembers. With nightmares it had begun. And with nightmares it would end.

He knows that as sure as hell found its home in church millenia ago.

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"Do you have nightmares? " Matthew asked him one day, blankly staring into the darkness as Will waited for the sweat to dry on his skin and slow down the rhythm of his heartbeat.

"Yes." he said, because he had never thought of lying to Matthew. "I dream of murders I did
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not commit.” His body trembled incessantly. He would condemn him. He damned himself.

Matthew looked at him thoughtfully. The moonlight wrung ornaments of wax and dust on his face.

“Tell me about them.” he said, sat down with Will on the bed and crossed his arms. The bandage on his shoulder was covered under a gray shirt. “Tell me everything. Don’t leave out any details. I won’t tell anyone.”

Will had not knocked of this offer. And even less, he had to regret it.

Matthew was an excellent listener.

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“Has Hannibal ever given you a nickname? “

Will snorts. The name falls into his heart like an icecob.

“Not that I know of. I guess we were not ready for this...” he says. Then he sees daylight. “Wait, did you just call me *baby* to highlight your property?”

Matthew stares at the ceiling, acting, as the question would not affect him personally.

“Possibly.” he mutters at some point. Will rolls his eyes.

“You’re crazy.” he is known.

Matthew kisses his forehead, implies acknowledgment and does not even blush. They are on the run for three months. In these three months a lot has happened. Much that would have driven Hannibal Lecter would to extreme anger, if he would have been informed.

“You too.
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“Eight months... hm, I seem to have lost track of time.” Will said.

Hannibal controlled the cufflinks on his sleeves.

“The is perfectly normal considering everything you endured through those months.” he explained bluntly. “One minute must have seemed like an hour, an hour like a day, a day like-
“

“I was happy.” Will smiled vaguely, as he uttered this word. This '*happy*' was such a remarkably strange guest on his tongue. “Therefore, I had lost track of time, Hannibal. I was happy and I sank into this happiness as in a soap bubble that shielded me from the outside world. Protected me. Saved me from final madness. “Endure” would be be no rational expression for what I experienced.”
Hannibal’s features were flowing and swirling like a storm, but in that moment a sour component peeled through and Will knew instinctively that he had shot an arrow into the blue and hit something red.

“What did you experience, Will?” His voice was sharp and thick like pastry, stirred up with ceramic shards.” What has made your kidnapper accesible for you?”

“Where were you?”

Carefully Will observes as Matthew enters the room, clips the rusty red winter jacket from his shoulders in passing by and throwing it carelessly into a corner. Then he kicks the boots off his feet and crawls to the profiler on their bed. His breath goes into a blissful moan when he embeds his head on Will's lap and wraps his arms automatically around his slender waist. Like an animal that has returned from his nocturnal ramble and rotates in his basket. Will smiles thinly and stretches out his hands, runs his fingertips massaging over the brown hair and the underlying scalp. Matthew has closed his eyes and responds to the touch with a patronizing tone that sounds suspiciously familiar to the purr of a cat-cohesive. Will knows this behavior is already good enough to laugh at and that’s what he does in the end.

“Hunting.” it mumbles to him from below. It sounds sleepy. Lulled in by the strange, pulsating heat of the other body. From the window, Will sees dense snowflakes fly across the meadow sewing the forest into a crystal white dress. He finds it very beautiful. It reminds him of the winters he has spent in Wolf Tramp ... this year he spends christmas without his dogs. He speculates about how Hannibal might celebrate this festival, well knowing that he, the promising puppet, is beyond his reach in this moment? Will begrudges the cruelty of this idea, but he catches himself in too how he hopes (very little, just a little bit), that Hannibal does not have to be alone this evening anyway. That he celebrates one of his ridiculous dinner parties. That he enjoys a fine glass of wine but not a whole bottle. That he has forgotten him, though Will knows with certainty that Hannibal will never forget him, because he has

escaped him and defeats are always difficult to digest. These considerations are mixed with sweet and sour images and the border between love and hate blurs before the profiler's eyes. He senses the formation of first tears and blinks them away hectically. The last thing he needs today is to spoil christmas by admitting to miss Hannibal Lecter. He hates himself so much for it, as he once loved the psychiatrist or still does, he can not even tell.
He looks down at Matthew's peaceful thatch down and affection creeps like purgatory in his chest, eats his hatred, eats his love. Eats Hannibal Lecter. This man is totally devoted to him and he shows it with every little, unimportant, pathetic gesture every time anew. It flatters Will, calms him, although it will always remain a mystery to him what Matthew sees in him that may be idealized or even idolized. He has given up trying to ask, since he would not receive a intelligible answer.

"Matthew ..." he whispers, pauses deliberately. "You said you had gone hunting. But I see no trophy."

A delicate hint. His counterpart grumbles. It is obvious that he'd rather lose himself in the pure essence of Will's presence instead of having a complicated conversation with him. This harmoniously glorified rest periods are few and far between them and while Matthew wants to savor every second, Will already grabs their possessions, for he fears (sometimes rightly, sometimes wrongly), they could have left too many tracks and soon the police would knock on their door and call after them.

"Still hanging on a tree. Merry christmas for the children." he answers says as timid as possible, although it does not change the content of the words of course.

Will knows only too well what that means. His face darkens.
"Matt, I told you we must not attract attention." he says sternly. The massaging movements of his fingers falter. Matthew groans in frustration.

"We don't!" He seems to feel the bubbling anger like heat under the skin of the profiler as he pulls up the hem of his shirt with his teeth, paving the bare abdomen with soothing butterfly kisses. I'm not the only killer in this district. Or in this state. They can't proof anything. We're safe." he breathes against the warm, soft skin.

Will snorts. He is attempted to keep Matthew's head (and especially his mouth (!) at a distance, but the other man sits like a boulder on his lower body. His lips open and a wet tongue slides out, a tongue that has often led their discussions to *other activities***.** Therefore Will's feelings are of mixed nature while he observes this sadistic tongue making its way into his belly button, as it would plunge into a lake. A well-known glow begins to flicker through his veins. Since their escape from the asylum, however, they have exchanged more than mere words and phrases.

"It was a risk nevertheless." he says, but it doesn't sound as reproachfully as before. He feels how Matthew's smile frames into his skin.

"No risk, Nofun." he says,hishandsstrokingplayfully overhiships. "Speaking of fun..."His voicecarriesahint ofmischief.A minute laterhegets toWill'sjeans buttons, making Will flinch abruptly.

“What are you doing?” he asks, despite that he knows very well what will follow and he takes it with a pinch of fear and cautious curiosity.

“I want to take care of you, Will.” Matthew responds unmoved. He looks up and Will is startled. The green eyes suddenly seem darker than usual. Inhuman. Raw. “You're always so stressed and worried. Does your health no good. Let me help you relax.” The ratcheting of anopening zipper echoes like a thunderclap in the room. Will blinks, closes his eyes. Hands on his legs. Fingers caught under the waistband of his boxers. A welcoming, cool breeze that touches his bare cock.
Many impressions. Too many impressions. Forbidden smooth lips that attach to his shaft and absorb the flavor of the throbbing meat like a fine wine.

“You've earned it to feel good with me, baby.”

The set and the hated nickname are enough to let Will whimper. It was so long ago since ...

“M-Matthew , ah-...” he is protesting, but chokes on the other letters, as Matthew leans over him in one fluid motion and kisses his semi-rigid erection. The infernal, wet tightness of his mouth he receives little later, wraps him greedily and soon Will comes undone, panting in the sheets, legs spread and inviting, letting Matthew rest hungrily between them. The only sound in the room is the smacking and sucking and hectic breath, making the whole situation even more ruthless. Will has his eyes closed and quivers. Trembles, as sipping lips rest on his belly. Burns, as finger, dressed in saliva, emphasize dances over his hole, dips in his tight entrance. It all happens so quickly. So easily. Unplanned. He barely remembers the last time he had sex or *enjoyed* sex. A fine film of sweat shines above his brow. Every fiber of his body tingles, bathes in the airy cocktail of endorphins and pulsating pleasure. He feels the blood rushing through his veins, pumpling through his convulsive forming heart like ravaging waterfalls. His head buzzes. His thoughts hover in golden sparkling dust.

“Is that good?” he hears as from afar, penetrating him further. “Does it feel good? Has he done the same for you?”

Grotesque. In spite of everything, in spite of the recent weeks Matthew’s prevailing thought is to outdo Hannibal Lecter, the Chesapeake Ripper. In every way possible.

Will owes him the answer. He can only squeeze a moan from his lips to give his feelings any form of expression. Heat girds his every sense, threatens to melt the flesh from his bones. In truth, his relationship with Hannibal the sexual aspect had been explicitly left out, despite various approaches that could not be misunderstood. He wonders whether this would have ever changed, if the psychiatrist would have been tempted to get him out of the prison personally. He believes so and is ashamed because of his sudden disappointment. He wished it had happened sooner. Before Matthew.

But Matthew does not mind, he sucks him off till he’s bone dry. And the profiler can’t help but moan and scream.

When Will comes, the wave of his climax surges over his body, it’s as if a wonderful, long outstanding load would be taken from him.

“Fuck.” He struggles for breath. “I’ve got nothing for you.”

Matthew smiles suggestively, licking some white sticky splashes from his lips. Doesn’t waste a single a drop.

“I’ve got you.” he whispers, settles down next to Will and kisses him on the mouth, as if nothing had happened. “This is everything I could have ever wished for.”

And Will is silent because he has nothing to say, just gives into the kiss with sluggish tenderness.

The two men would have had much to talk about. Important, essential things that contain blood, corpses and the value of life and death.

But they don’t. Their lips are busy enough.

The profiler blinked as if he awoke from a medicamentious trance. His memory was a mist of images, colors and word fragments.

“Love.” he replied back to Lecter's question. “Unsolicited, ubiquitous, unconditional ... love.”

Hannibal's mask showed no simple cracks in that moment. It broke and fell completely away from him. Disgust marked his features like a boiling plague.

“For whom? Your captor?” He held strong in itself that could be heard in his voice. It would not have surprised Will if Hannibal had spit the syllables on the floor like broken glass.

“Matthew was not my captor.” he corrected and deliberately fell into the pitch that was usually used for a recalcitrant child who had erred and denied it vehemently. That this was incredibly rude to Hannibal, he was aware of course. “He never was. He was my savior. For some time he was even my ... yes, my *everything*. What actually **you** should have been . He looked at me, I saw him. We were equal.”

“There is an abysmal difference between Matthew Brown and me, Will. To me you truly mean something. To Matthew Brown, you meant nothing. He has never loved you, only left you in this believe to manipulate your mind more easily. He used you, Will.”

“You’re lying.” Will replied. His voice was cold as ice and that was what had become of his heart. An iceberg. “He was the only one who never wanted to use me, who never sent me into the minefield for his ow amusement. Only you did this to me, Hannibal. Only you. Matthew

has opened my eyes .”

“He blinded and alienated you from those who really love you.” Hannibal countered without batting an eyelash. He tilted his head gently, Will looked like a dog suffering from rabies and he was not sure yet whether it would be kinder to shoot the animal immediately, or to wait until its condition improved. Or went worse. Will recognized pity and it made him gag. “Let me help you. I can teach you again how to separate light from darkness. You only need to say *please*.”

Will shook his head.

“I can’t.”

“Why not?”

"Because I've become colorblind. All I see is red. Only red and nothing will ever change that. Never again.”

Blood speckles the ground like a splash of color an untouched canvas. Matthews throat is a rag cloth of blood and skin and what lies between and shrugs.

“It’s alright, Mr. Graham.” he groans, spits scarlet saliva in the air. “I've always known it would come to this. That ... they’d get me ... ... somewhen.” A thick liquid gush of blood is flowing from his mouth, the smell of polluted and moist metal.

Will keeps him in his arms, supports his upper body with one hand on his back and one on his chest.

Mr. Graham

The salutation bites in his ears like the pistol shot that hit Matthew in the abdomen nealy five heartbeats ago. The nurse falls into his old, anonymous pattern. This is not good. It is a step backwards. It means loss of control. The end of an era that should never have been allowed to build up.
Will leans over to him, while police sirens scream outside and he hears the clothing of armed men and women clap almost obscenely against their bodies. His face is adorned with tears that glisten like plastic beads in the dimmed light of the room.

“Don’t leave me.” All power, all impressiveness has left his voice. What leaves his throat is a death whimper. And he is not the one who rolls a blood carpet over the floor. Matthew grins at him. The grooves of his teeth are glued dark red. It is the smile of a man who knows his fate and does not regret it.

“I do not want to leave. Oh, I really don’t want to.” He shakes his head slightly, underlining his words syllable by syllable. Giggles and spits and giggles. His neck joint cracks terribly. Left rotation. *Crack*. Right rotation. *Crack*. The green of his eyes shines like turbid frog spawn. Glassy. Will hears voices outside. The bursting of locked doors. Heavy steps. Steamed calls. It's like a nightmare, he wants to wake up, wake up, but he cannot tweak himself because he has to keep Matthew in his arms. He needs to keep him until the end, right? He needs ...

Matthew looks at him and the pain on his face is marketed by equanimity.
“Do you believe in a heaven?” he asks in a mild, scratchy sound. His breath comes hard and metallic out of his lungs. “Maybe ... we’ll see ... a level ... lower ...”

“Matt.” Will has not shed any tears within months, but now he could not care less. His brain seems like it is filmed through a meat grinder, his vision becomes blurred and unreliable. Betrayal at every corner, danger approaching, even in his own head. “Matthew, please don’t.” A strangled whisper. He has forgotten how to cry. Has forgotten how to move.

Has forgotten how to dream.

Matthew lets out a gurgling noise. His throat shines red and bright. He stretches out a trembling hand after Will, lets it rest on his cheek. With the thumb pad he strokes the soft skin he touched so often in the past countless nights and days. His fingers are freezing cold.

“Did you love me, Mr. Graham?” he whispers, the pupils widely dilated like black space holes. “More than him?”

Will sobs. The wet rivulets climb triumphantly over his heated cheeks, burning in scratches and abrasions. He does not ask about who Matthew talks about. He never has. He never needs to.

“Yes.” he spits out in pain and his heart bursts with every heartbeat. “Hell yes, and now stay with me! You don’t want to not leave me alone with him again, right? You don’t want ...” He denies him the choice. It can’t end like this, it **can’t** ! Individual, slightly curly strands cling to his temples. His glasses lie somewhere in the dim light of the room, shattered. Salty drops fall on Matthew’s shirt, mix with the blood there.

“No, Mr. Graham.” he says. His eyes flatter, flash open, close, flash open again. “I'm ...”

He does not bring it to an end. His head falls back and his body goes numb. The eyes are dull murmur, sunk in well-tempered meat that will cool down soon, and lids that will petrify even sooner.

And Will? Will lets go. Of everything. Also of himself.

Matthew Brown dies with the smile of a winner on his lips as the profiler’s dam breaks and Will pours his grief in sobs over the room. He can only be separated from the corpse of his friend (Friend? Partner? Servant? Lover?) after two FBI agents pull him away forcibly. There

must be three more to crown this project with success, for Will struggles like an animal and scratches and bites and screams and still the tears are running over his wrinkled face. He is crazy, out of control and really, really angry. Furious. They drag him away and stun him with syringes and drugs, until he is calm.

Later, the officers are sitting in their headquarters to congratulate themselves for the brilliant catch while gossiping about how it is possible that a classified sociopath can release such an exaggerated flood of emotions over the loss of his crony. One will say, he would perhaps have remained a human being in the innermost core. Maybe he's still willing to feel such things as affection and therefore loss can hurt him. Another one will laugh at him for it and call him a 'Newbie' that ' should stick his sensibility in the ass if he wants to keep his job '.

No one really knows whether Will's outbreak was a deception, or has been just a genuine distraction. And there is the fact that he's a mass murderer and has killed many young women brutally, gutted and showcased them…

They are not eager to find out anyway.
The case is shelved and that's it.

"I'm no longer the virgin you captured and used, Dr. Lecter." Will stood a few inches in front of the grid, there creating closeness between him and the psychiatrist, where they could not reach each other. "I am consumed. Or spoiled, as you'd probably call it."

Hannibal kept a stoic expression. He considered.

"The spoiled has their charm as well as the innocenct. They are two halves of the same coin. I have always tried to recognize all aspects of your character." he went on. A fact that let Will lift his posture.

"You still care?" It was not a rhetorical question. He waited for the *surprise* with abstinence.

A smile in response. Narrow and sharp as a knife blade, precisely cutting into Will's flesh.

"You could never cease to irritate me. My interest is at your command."

Will stepped even closer. Step by step. As he inhaled, the hard mesh of the grid bars touched his chest.

"So you never gave up on me? Not once in those eight months? Not for a single moment?"

“I already told you before that unspeakable incident. You are my friend. And you will always **be** my friend. Nothing will ever change that.” Hannibal's eyes narrowed, becoming fervent slots in the undergrowth. “You were not yourself when you had the idea to kill me. I guess I'm right thinking that Matthew has generously supported your misguided delusions about me being the Chesapeake Ripper. He must have practically begged you for a chance to prove his worth to you. The obsession he had for you was always maniac.”

Will grinned bleakly.

“This sounds nice for an outsider.” he said. “But do you really know what you do to me? How much your words can hurt?”

“Acceptance would take the pain and ease your conscience.“

“Easier said than done.” Will held out his hands, rehearsing his grip on the iron bars. “After what Matthew ... what ... he -”

“Matthew Brown is dead, Will.” With one fluid motion, Hannibal crossed the white line on the floor. From a distance you could hear warning voices that reminded Will of a pair of boulders and Pitbull yapping. “He can’t harm you anymore.”

Will looked at Hannibal. Their eyes met. He sank into the brown that drowned him and loved it.

“Maybe you’re right.” The grip on the grid tightened. His knuckles stood out white. The urge to touch Hannibal, to feel him was undeniable and painful as hell. “Maybe Matthew actually used me. Maybe I have missunderstood this kind of… love.”

Hannibal's smile remained constant. A flicker in his gently spread pupils.

“You were disoriented and beset with visions and feelings of guilt.” he explained calmly. “You longed for a caregiver, someone who promised you affection, protection and rescue. You were emaciated in every conceivable sense. What Matthew implied to you is called the *Stockholm syndrome*. One should therefore not blame you. I will express myself in court about it and require therapy for you.”

“You want me back under your influence.” Will licked his bitten lips. “Will you take care of me, Hannibal? Love me, as Matthew has done it?” He could not prevent the lightly insulting tone. It dripped like honey from his tongue.

Hannibal took his time with his answer.

“No.” He touched the grid with the fingertips of his right hand, careful not to strip Will’s once. “I can do better than him.”

The profiler took a deep breath. The bouquet of rot and death warning circulated in his mouth.

“Really? Do you dare to taste what he tasted? Whitewash what he spotted?“ He took a hand and let it travel over chest, led it from the collarbone down and stop just above the pelvis. “This body ... he has taught it some things. Things that would redound to a pleasureble benefit for you ...” He went up again, put the flat palm on the left side of his chest where his heart located. Hannibal pursued every inch.

” And this heart? This heart is broken, Dr. Lecter. Do you want to fix it again?”

“It would be an honour.”

It would be your privilege.” Will corrected idly, lowered his eyelids at half-mast and leaned forward so that his lips collided with the iron while speaking. “No matter how many times Matthew has fucked me in the mattress - or in the car backseat, depending on our location - reaching my orgasm I always screamed *your* name and not his. As you can imagine Matthew didn’t like that but I could not control it, not even when he hit me or ... used the knife.” Will swallowed in discomfort (as in theatre) and Hannibal's eyes were glued on his bopping Adam's apple. “I didn’t want to, but I ... I only when I imagined you were the one who, well...” He laughed shrilly and in the empty hallway it sounded like a howling corpse. “I can’t believe I confess this to you now.”

Hannibal's gaze had darkened, flashed like the sea on a moonless night in June.

“ You should never be ashamed of the truth.” he said. Will chuckled.

“Maybe.” he replied. “But do you think the truth will free me from this cell?”

“We can try.” Hannibal's fingers danced on the rusty steel strands as on the strings of a violin. the part ended when his index finger rested on the back of Will’s hand rested a bee that tried to decide whether to stab or abolish the pain for a later occasion. There was something incredibly tender about it, transfigured, but also diabolical in this simple, simple gesture. “I will make sure that they try to understand you.”

Will did nothing to evade the contact. On the contrary, he shuddered, cut a silent groan from his mouth, knowing that the psychiatrist was watching him closely. In the background he heard a disturbing murmur of voices. The whirring of an electric opening and steps. Guards would drag Hannibal out of the cell with kindest violence and banish himself into one of the dark corners. So he had to act quickly. He would not get another chance too soon. And when that happened, it was probably too late already.

“Prove it.” he whispered heatedly, bit his lower lip, so that it shimmered coral red. “Prove me that you will keep your promise. That you will take me with you, when everything is over.” He dropped any shell, he asked Hannibal, he pleaded. “A further separation from you, no matter how long it should last, I won’t be able to endure. I've learned from my mistakes. And collected my knowledge. Help me, Hannibal. Help me!” Humility and willingness mingled in his baritone, blended in addition with despair and the loneliness of his soul. A crescendo of suffering, solely composed for Hannibal Lecter. The older man drove his index finger gently over Wills knuckles. His face remained unreadable, as weathered rock or marble.

“There will be no more separation.” he merely said. But the finality of this sentence heaved like anvils in Will’s bones. Hannibal was God in that moment. And God's word was law.

He blinked frantically. The last tears he had, sparkled from his eyes, ran down his cheeks. A heartbreaking picture. An aria of human porcelain.

“Then kiss me.” he breathed and burning tendons weighed in every breeze of his breath. “Show me that I'm not alone.”

He slid his hands through the interstices of the grid and wedged it in Hannibal jacket, directed him closer, as close as possible. Whether Hannibal was too overwhelmed to refuse in time, or already knew the advance of this development and welcomed it, could not be named. At least he struggled for a second, as Will's lips collided with his and he was finally the one who called in the inlet mouth and their tongues entangled in a garment of saliva, meat and food. Will gave himself willingly played the game of their instincts and got into a toxic frenzy ble lust. He had imagined that it would feel so good. He had suspected that Matthew’s whole efforts were nothing compared to the pure ecstasy of **this**.

He almost regretted the decision he had made, before one even provided him the message that Hannibal Lecter would pay him a visit.

... Almost.

“A capsule?”

Will looks at the medicine Matthew has placed before them on the table with unbelieving eyes. It looks harmless, like an oversized aspirin or a suppository. Nevertheless, there is a menacing aura that Will cannot place. Perhaps it because of the unusual color of the powder, captured in the transparent membrane. Black as ink.

“My father has developed it in his lab to commit suicide. ... very effective as soon as it mingles with the bloodstream. Take one and you’re done.” Matthew says, shrugs, as if to excuse the career of his sire. “He wanted a violent but brief agony. That was his last wish. Since my mother had died when I was born, I had go to the orphanage then. He had never got over her loss.”

Will lowers his eyes. Grief flowers on his eyelids.

“I’m sorry.”

Matthew celebrates a remunerative hand movement.

“It has been many years ago.” he says. “I don’t know why he has made two of these things, but when I saw it lying next to him, I put them in my bag before the paramedics could find it. Well, I thought maybe I could use it someday.”

He takes the unimpressive-looking capsule and gives it to Will as a granola bar.

“Here.”

Will raises an eyebrow. His hands are as heavy as stone on his knees.

“Why? “ he asks. Mistrust swells in his voice. Matthew looks at him calmly. The heat in his green eyes never takes off, not even in anger, as Will could already notice.

“If you're caught by the cops they'll make you sit on the death chair or you'll be given significant attention in a mental hospital. They'll lock you away or they'll kill you." Without hesitation, Matthew promptly grabs his right hand, turns the palm outward and lets the puny capsule roll in. “My baby won’t die by a syringe or electric shocks just to offer these law-abiding assholes a good psychological show.” he scolds and it sounds almost heroic if you forget to read between the lines. Will, has no other choice than to accept this diffuse gift, rolling the capsule critically between thumb and forefinger.

“What about you?” he asks.

Matthew shrugs.

“I don’t care *how* I die. I'm dead either way.” he says coldly. Will’s lips form a hard line.

“Don’t you even care if you're suffering?”

“Suffering is relative, as is the standard of justice or fairness.”

“And of course you give a damn how I’d feel about this, right? “

Will hates to sound like a typical housewife from one of those annoying TV series, but he can not help himself. He has a very bad feeling about this and his intuition rarely lets him down. Matthew sighs. He wants to grab for Will’s arm, but Will eludes him. Matthew sighs again.

“Of course I give a damn.” he says patiently. “But this is about you and how to create a way out. It’s just in case, okay? Nobody said that it **has** to happen.”

Will snorts. He's still not quite convinced.

“Where should I hide it?” he asks. “The team of FBI investigations are very rigorous.” Matthew smiles. Then he points his little finger to his lips.

“In your mouth.” he suggests. “Put it under your tongue and bite on it when the time comes. The poison is released immediately and as soon as it connects with your saliva, any help comes too late. Try it.”

Will tries it. The capsule tastes like nothing and is also designed very inconspicuous. Sleek and small it nestles under his tongue and stays there. Waiting for its use.

Will tries to speak. The capsule doesn't hamper him.

"Better than the chair?" he asks ironically and Matthew laughs.

"Better than the chair." he says softly and winks. It is somewhat sad, but true.

Will smiles.Smiling because the situation would be miserable otherwise. He knows what might happen to them. He knows that their relationship has an expiration date and the clock runs out.

But they do not talk about it. Nothing is as beautiful as the lie. It keeps the dead alive.

"Do you love me, Matt?" Will asks bluntly, because he somehow feels he won't hear it as often as he'd like to.

Matthew draws near to him and spreads his arms. Will falls against his chest and the arms fold like insect wings around his body. Protective. The capsule rests in the heat of his mouth and clicks from time to time against his teeth. It disturbs him hardly.

"More than murder."

And at this rate it should stay.

Will felt horrible little when he saw the eyes of Hannibal Lecter, *his* Hannibal Lecter, widened in horror and yellow foam with bloody bubbles poured out of his mouth. He was stunned, as he dripped the poisoned chunks into the other mouth with the tip of his tongue and felt that it began its corrosive effect on both. Matthew had not lied. A brutal but short agony.

The thumping steps of the guards and their calls were reminiscent of the humming of bumblebees. Droning, but harmless. Useless. The process could not be reversed once the poison had conquered the body. They tumbled to the ground simultaneously, fell inside and outside the cell. Breathed the life out of their swollen lungs and died with a pale violet veil before their faces, but they did not take their eyes from each other, holding on as this would save them from the abyss of death. It would have needed so many words at this moment, words Will could read in the dark swirling pupils of the psychiatrist, but the only thing they were able to was to share a desperate eye contact and the gurgling in their throats and the bluish-green discoloration of their skin. Morbid art.

Hannibal died first. Probably because of his older age. His head slumped to the side and the blank gray of the floor reflected in his dull marble eyes. He was only a shell of what he had pretended to be. A psychatrist, a protector, a god and a monster. Will managed to smile before the unwholesome mortis set in. Then he sailed across the Styx and was received by death with open arms. Tears dried in his hair.

Oh, how much he had loved this man. In spite of Matthew. Despite Alana. Hated and loved and then went so far as to love his own hate and hate his own love.

At the end he loved him so much that he took him into his grave so that they could spent their rotten eternity together.

He hadn't been able to leave without him a second time.

"**We kill what we don't permit us to love**"

~ Anke Maggauer-Kirsche ~

End Notes

Hello :)

Hope you liked the story^^ Any comments about it? Kudos? Please, I'd love to read your opinions, I'm nervous ^///^

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!